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## THE RECONSTRUCTED CITY

By J. RUSSELL SMITH, PH.D.,

Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania.

When an architect builds a factory, he lays down upon the table before him a list of the various things the factory is to do, and then proceeds from these known needs to create a structure which will best meet them. It seems peculiar that, despite our thousands of years of experience with cities, there has been so little attempt to apply large scale planning to the idea of the city as a functioning unit and lay it out accordingly. Is it any more desirable that a city should grow indefinitely large than that a man should grow indefinitely large? Perhaps most of us as little boys have wished the wish of fairies that we might be as big as a giant so that we might pick up certain undesirable persons and put them between our fingers and place them where they belonged. Is the world-wide desire of cities to grow big, big, big, any more sane? My answer is emphatically "no." A city is to perform certain functions, and when it is big enough to perform those, additional size is of no more value than an additional one hundred pounds is to a man who already weighs one hundred and eighty.

### *The World's Greatest Town Planner.*

Mr. Ebenezer Howard, an Englishman, sat down and drew up the plans of an ideal city. He first analyzed the proposition. The city affords to its inhabitants the social opportunity of numbers, to the factory the labor market of numbers, but it tends inevitably to crowd. On the other hand, the advantages of the country are cheap sites and room to grow things in the yard and garden, room to play, fresh air, and nearness to food supplies, but lack of social and employment opportunity. Then having put these things down on the table, he proceeded to plan a city which swung around the cardinal principles of (1) having all the inhabitants so placed that they were so near their factories that they could walk to their jobs, (2) so near to open space that they could easily walk to the farms, fields, and playgrounds, yet (3) sufficiently numerous to make the labor supply for factories which pro-

duce. This after all is the object of the city. These ends can only be attained by having a definite size for the city. This means limitation of the population. Why have more if the city is big enough. His ideal plan of the city was circular with an open park in the center, around which were gathered the public buildings of which the city needed but one, or at most but few, such as the town library, town hall, theatre, opera house, museums, etc. Then came some four or five circular streets of residence, with a wide avenue in the middle of them with a park space in the middle of it, with room for schoolhouses, churches, masonic buildings, and other semi-public structures. The last street was to be a row of factories with a belt line railroad behind them and beyond that open ground for garden plots and farm land.

### *Nothing New About It*

By the application of our well-established principles of building restrictions, crowding was kept out by limiting the size of lots to a certain minimum and then limiting the proportions of a lot that could be covered by a house. Thus Mr. Howard figured that the city would be full grown with about thirty-two thousand, more or less, depending upon the size of the families. After this city was full the other increased residence needs could be met by building another city nearby, just as we build the next suburban station on the railroad. In the ideal plan about six thousand acres are required for the city, of which about half are left for farms, and the remaining in streets and city.

### *How It Works*

The average American predicts failure for any such enterprise. However, England feels the city problem much more keenly than we do in this country, for it has had the industrial city longer, and in recruiting for armies, particularly for the Boer War, England has discovered with horror the physical degeneration which results with generations of city dwellers, with inadequate dwelling facilities, no gardens, no ground, no play facilities. After much hard work, Mr. Howard succeeded in forming a Garden City Association that raised enough subscriptions of cash to start, although they did not get the necessary one and one-half million dollars which they thought they should have. They bought about four thousand acres

of farm land forty miles north of London in Hertfordshire on one of the great railroads and proceeded to set apart the central half of it for city, lay out streets and plan a factory town. Owing to the contour of the ground, there was no attempt to maintain the circular idea of the abstract plan, but all the principles were applied, namely, nearness of the man to his job, to the open country, to play space, and a roomy lot for each residence. It has succeeded. In nine years between 1904 and 1913 about thirty factories have moved to the place, which had a population of 8,000 and was steadily increasing. The crucial test, however, of its success is the balance sheet. It was financed by a group of individuals who were willing to put up some money, buy the land, and get their 5 per cent cumulative dividends eventually if it succeeded. It followed the usual English plan of giving long leases to land and letting tenants improve. This is the way many English cities are already built. The company bought at farm values and rented at low town values. Thus the cottager who buys a lease for a plot pays perhaps \$10 a year for the lot, but as there are seven or eight such lots per acre, the income on the original purchase price of \$200 is ample. Thus these leases which had been sold when the town was one-quarter grown caused the balance sheet for the year 1912 to show a profit. The financial plan provides that the promoters shall get 5 per cent, and after that further profits shall go to the city in improvements and reduction of taxes. One of the manufacturers told me he could foresee the time when the town would be without taxes, and then the manufacturers would come there "in droves."

### *Its Appeal to the Manufacturer*

I regard this attempt to eliminate the crowding evil from the manufacturing town as perhaps the most important single social experiment going on in Europe, for it is a statistical fact that no large city population anywhere is physically and numerically maintaining itself. In 1913, I spent several days in this city going through it very carefully to see how it appealed to the manufacturers. I had letters of introduction to the prophets of the place, but really I did not care how it appealed to the prophets, for I knew that in advance. I did not care how it appealed to the poets, the artists, the retired bankers, the maiden ladies living on snug incomes, nor the cranks, nor the merchants who sold to all these,

nor even to the workers who made up the bulk of the population. The worker goes where there are jobs. The butcher, the baker, and the candle-stick maker come to serve him, so that the vital part of a city is the way it appeals to the man who promotes the primal industry, which is usually manufacturing. Therefore I interviewed the manufacturers of the place, making a special attempt to try to find those who were most distinctly what you would call the practical turn of mind in contrast to the altruistic. Everywhere I found the same enthusiasm. I went to get their ideas, but first I must go and look at their plants. They all pointed out the great superiority of the plant on these two- or three-acre cheap sites over the plants they had left in London, many of which were crowded, and so dark as to be lighted by gas, and so inadequate as to interfere with the best efficiency of work.

Perhaps the best interview was given by an automobile manufacturer who had been the hardest to persuade to come there, and who finally consented to do so for the following reasons as he stated them:

First. When a man bangs about in an omnibus for an hour and even more, morning and evening, going to and from work, as my men did, I figured it was wearing him out, and making him less efficient for his work. I also figured that the six-pence he had to pay for that finally came out of me.

Second. In London where there were lots of works, we found the men were becoming rovers, increasingly so. If a man did not like it in my works, he could move to the next. When he needed a little discipline, he would get mad and quit, and go to the next place where he would do the same thing and be none the better for the move. It cost us at least two pounds Sterling when a man quit. Now where there are less works of a kind up here, a man will listen to reason, is a little more dependent on his job, learns, and becomes a better worker.

Third. The building restrictions appeal to me. In London, if I wanted to put a stove pipe through a foundry shed roof, I had to draw up plans and specifications, apply to the board of building inspectors, pay a fee, and maybe wait thirty days for them to get around to it, and perhaps be refused. Here, if I want to do it, I go ahead and stick her out. My plant is so far from the next plant that it can catch fire and burn down if it wants to without much danger to others. In London a rubber plant came and stood alongside mine, and the underwriters put my insurance up 100 per cent. Here that cannot happen. I have signed a uniform contract with the company like every other manufacturer has, and I know just what they can do and what I can do.

I found out one thing that I never believed. I had heard, of course, lots of socialists and other people say that if a man had a nice new factory with plenty of light and air, and good recreation, he worked better, but, Lord, Mr. Smith, I never believed it. But it's a fact. I know, for I have brought men here from

London, have brought the machines with them and the same men worked on the same machines at the same rate of pay with the same inspection and same bonus system, the same number of hours per week, making exactly the same brand of machine, and they turned out more work. It amounts to between 7 per cent and 8 per cent. That cuts down overhead charge, and what's more, the quality of the output is better. I can't give you that in percentage, but I have been running these works for fifteen years and I know. The stuff goes through better, and less material is spoiled.

When the work is over, the children come up to the factory gates to meet their fathers and they are home in ten minutes. You ought to see this place on Saturday afternoons. It is full of football games. Every works has a football team or two or sometimes three. All the teams play match games with each other in winter and cricket games in the summer.

It is not an uncommon thing to see a factory in the corner of a three-acre lot over which it may eventually grow. Meanwhile football goal posts indicate the use the ground is being put to. Owing to the fact that this land is had at a low lease per year, the works can easily afford to rent three acres of ground to expand on.

It is the most beautiful factory town I have ever seen, for the reason that every house has room enough for flowers in front and vegetables behind. At no place do they have lots more than twelve to the acre, which means that lots can be practically 20 x 200 feet, even in sections given over to the artisan. That makes provision for a small front yard, cottage site, little back yard, and 100 feet left for garden in the rear. A labor agitator with whom I had a long interview on Sunday told me he could pretty nearly tell how long a man had been there by looking at his garden. The first year after arriving from London, he did not do much. Then summer came, the neighbors began to hand vegetables across the line. The next year he made a start, and by the third year his garden began to be of some real value.

Inasmuch as the town is definitely planned, it has ample factory districts on railroad sidings, and there is on each side of this a large district given over to cottages for factory workers. This is reserved for factory workers, by building restrictions which insist that houses shall cost up to a certain minimum, but not beyond a certain maximum. That practically means artisans' cottages. Beyond that in both directions are larger lots, at higher rent with different building restrictions, which means middle class. On the highest ground still further away from the factories are yet larger and more expensive lots where factory owners and persons of some means

have their beautiful homes. Near the station is the natural place for the shopping district, while immediately across from it is a seventy-acre playground, with several smaller ones of twelve, five, three, and one-half acres, etc., scattered about the place, which is, so far as I know, the only town of its size in the world that has public provision for simultaneous play of any large percentage of its population.

The limitation of population is provided for in building restrictions. By this means these facilities of accessibility and play space become permanent. Just beyond the factory district come the farm holdings. Perhaps Mr. Howard's dream of a town that combines the advantages of both city and country will come true. It has certainly made a good start.

The people of this town have almost unique opportunities for the development of health, muscle, character, and wealth through by-industry. There is a very considerable chance to duplicate the conditions of the artisan's life before the factories came. Think of the opportunities for boys and girls to garden, especially as the time for beginning factory labor is being postponed. This opportunity for wealth and solace and the additional ones offered by poultry are a boon to the old, and they are being used in Garden City. Back of a beautifully embowered yard lived a retired engine driver. Back of his cottage was one of the most productive bits of garden, 50 x 40 feet, that I have ever seen. If a family wishes to go at market gardening on the side, small holdings can be rented just beyond the town limit. It is not necessary to pay city lot rent. The land is not suburban, it is farm land, so denominated in the contract, and the contract is as tight as it could be made.

The health of the community as indicated by the appearance of the school children, and by vital statistics is unusually good.

### *The Needless Reconstruction of Indefinitely Planned Cities*

The fact that this garden city is definitely planned saves it from the endless turmoil of reconstruction which a growing city encounters, owing to the fact that as the city grows, each part has a different use with every generation. Therefore each generation tears down what the previous generation built to last for many decades. Thus in Philadelphia and in New York the business

section is invading the residence section, either using awkward old residences, or tearing down and building anew. This winter a block of splendid substantial houses worth many thousand dollars was torn away near the University of Pennsylvania to make room for another university building. That great university with 5,000 students on the campus has outdoor space for one football or baseball game at a time, leaving the other 99 $\frac{3}{5}$  per cent without the possibilities of outdoor athletics at that time. Thus the city has swamped itself, and its institutions, as all growing cities do where every building operation and every unit of growth is part of the heterogeneous individual effort. The supreme example of this waste is perhaps shown by the subway, that fearfully expensive kind of construction that never should have been. The suburbs of a growing city are successively swamped by new uses. Because the people are expecting in a short time to sell them for building purposes, the land is held for high prices and the chief occupation of the land that should be in crops is the support of "for sale" signs. Around Garden City is a belt of farms and playgrounds, which, owing to the fact that it is definitely set apart for these uses, has and can have no sale value, in which respects it resembles our parks.

The most significant part of the whole thing is that it has been done by the application of existing practices and existing laws with existing human science. Most attempts at social reconstruction have to await a conversion of the majority to a new point of view, and if the dreams of the socialist come true, we must also develop an entirely new system and type of business administration. In contrast to that millennial process, a garden city like Letchworth, England, can be built now in any well-chosen location. Any group of capitalists with constructive imagination and good business ability can start in and do it under existing law. As to its areal aspects—there is plenty of room along the Delaware River for all the industrial population now near it (and much more) to be so situated that they could avail themselves of all the principles involved in Garden City and have the best access to the harbor. They now have very poor access to it.

If our urban people lived in such cities as Garden City it would beyond a doubt reduce the cost of living, increase wealth through by-industry, increase pleasure through the possibilities of recreation,



increase efficiency through increased health. The land speculator alone would lose—lose his present much too widespread opportunity to take something and give nothing in return. Something for nothing is a process that is variously regarded according to our social enlightenment.